The Story Of Savitri And Satyavan

King Asvapati is the king of Madra. He and his wife Malavi have no children for a long time. So they pray to Savitr, the Sun God Savitr every day. The Sun God is pleased by their prayers. He tells them that they will soon be blessed with a daughter. Asvapati and Malavai are overjoyed when they hear this.

As predicted by the Sun God, Malavi gives birth to a girl child. Asvapati and Malavi are very grateful for Savitr's blessings. So they decide to name their daughter Savitri.

Malavi and Asvapati are happy to see Savitri growing up into a beautiful woman. They know she is very devoted to them. But they are amazed to see her strength of character. She had the knack of getting what she wanted by pursuing it with dedication. She always spoke softly, clearly and firmly. She was sensitive to the feelings of others.

Soon, it is time for her to get married. Asvapati and Malavi knew it would be difficult to find a suitable husband for Savitri. She was simply too good for ordinary princes. Asvapati tries to find the right husband for her. But he fails. So he asks her to choose a husband for herself. Savitri agrees to do so. She sets out on a pilgrimage.

A king called Dyumatsena had been ruling over Salwa at that time. He had lost everything, including his sight, in a battle. He was living in exile with his wife and son in a forest.

Savitri meets them during her pilgrimage. She knows Satyavan is the man she is looking for. She returns home and tells her father about her decision. Her father agrees to get her married to Satyavan.

Just then, sage Narada appears before them and tells them that Satyavan was destined to die exactly a year later. Asvapati and Malavi are shocked to hear this. They tell Savitri to change her decision and choose another man as her husband. But Savitri stands by her decision saying that she

will not consider marrying anyone else. Asvapati agrees to get her married because he knows Savitri would not change her mind.

Asvapati meets Dyumatsena and asks him if he would accept Savitri as his daughter-in-law. Dyumatsena agrees to it immediately. He knows Savitri loved Satyavan deeply.

Savitri and Satyavan get married. Savitri starts living with Satyavan and his parents in the forest. She does not mind giving up her luxurious lifestyle as a princess. She loves Satyavan so such things do not matter to her. She also has a lot of respect for her parents-in-law. She empathises with their predicament.

All is fine for 11 months and 27 days. Savitri knows that Satyavan would leave her forever after 3 days. So she starts fasting. Dyumatsena, her father-in-law asks her not to perform such severe austerities. But Savitri tells him that she loves Satyavan a lot. She cannot even think of parting with him forever. Dyumatsena admires Savitri's courage and offers her all his support.

The day Satyavan is to die arrives. Savitri decides to be calm and cool. She, as usual, accompanies Satyavan to the forest. Satyavan starts chopping wood so that they can use it as fuel. Savitri stacks it up neatly. After a while, Satyavan feels very weak. He asks Savitri if he can sleep in her lap for some time. Savitri agrees to take a break with him. Both of them find a shady banyan tree and rest for a while.

That is when, Yama, the lord of death comes to fetch the soul of Satyavan. Savitri follows Yama quietly. She does not complain to him at all. In fact, she knows that as 'Dharmaraja' he must do his duty without expecting anything in return. She talks with Yama and asks him about his life. Yama tells her that no one wants to be friends with him because he is the lord of death. Savitri wonders how he can live without friends like that. She offers to be his friend. Yama is impressed by her understanding nature and offers her three boons. But he tells her that she cannot ask for Satyavan's life.

Savitri does not hesitate even for a minute. She says, “Please restore my father-in-law’s eyesight and kingdom. Please bless my father with a hundred sons. Please bless me with Satyavan’s children.”

Yama is awestruck by Savitri’s presence of mind and the concern that she has for others. But he is Dharmaraja. He has to do his duty. So he looks at Savitri with compassion and asks her to change her third request. Savitri looks at him directly, smiles beautifully and says, “Please give me Satyavan’s life.”

Yama realizes that he had only asked her to change the boon. He had not specifically told her “except for Satyavan’s life” this time. He understands that Savitri really loved Satyavan. He decides to change his decision just once because he knew it was rare to find a woman like Savitri.

He brings Satyavan back to life. Savitri is overjoyed to see her husband return from his deep sleep. They both ask for Yama’s blessings. Yama tells them that they will live for a hundred years happily. He then tells them that they will have several children.

Savitri’s father, Asvapati and Satyavan’s father Dymutasena are overjoyed to see Satyavan and Savitri return together from the forest. When they listen to Savitri’s story, they thank Yama and all the other gods for being so kind to them and appreciate Savitri’s courage.

- Vat Savitri is celebrated by married women for three days in the month of Jyestha (May- June). The last day of this celebration falls on a full moon day. The women place a small idol of Goddess Savitri under a banyan tree. They apply kumkum to the idol and decorate the deity with flowers. They place seven kinds of grains in a basket and offer it to the Goddess along with some water. They mark their love for their husbands by tying a ceremonial thread around the banyan tree as they go around it. They then apply kumkum to one another and listen to the story of Savitri and Satyavan.
- The oldest version of Savitri’s story is narrated in the ‘vana parva’ of Mahabharata. Yudhishtra is touched by Draupadi’s devotion and

asks sage Markandeya if he knew of any other woman who matched Draupadi’s devotion. That is when sage Markandeya tells Yudhistra the story of Savitri and Satyavan.

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